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Kennedy et al.

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(54) **SUTURE PACKAGING**

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Apr. 7, 2006, now Pat. No. 7,637,369, which is a
continuation-in-part of application No. 10/891,604,
filed on Jul. 15, 2004, now Pat. No. 7,520,382.

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18, 2003.

(51) **Int. Cl.**
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(52) **U.S. Cl.** **206/63.3**

(58) **Field of Classification Search** 206/63.3,
206/380, 382, 383

See application file for complete search history.

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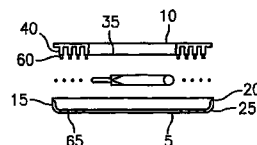
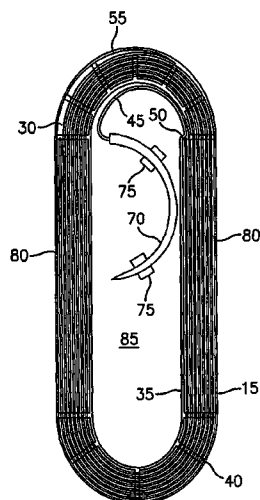
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Primary Examiner — Jacob K Ackun

(57) **ABSTRACT**

A package for surgical suture material is also provided. The
package includes a base and a cover. The cover is configured
to be placed adjacent to the base to form the package for
surgical suture material and including a plurality of posts
extending from an outer surface thereof configured for receiv-
ing an information label. The package may further include an
information label heat staked to the cover.

10 Claims, 13 Drawing Sheets



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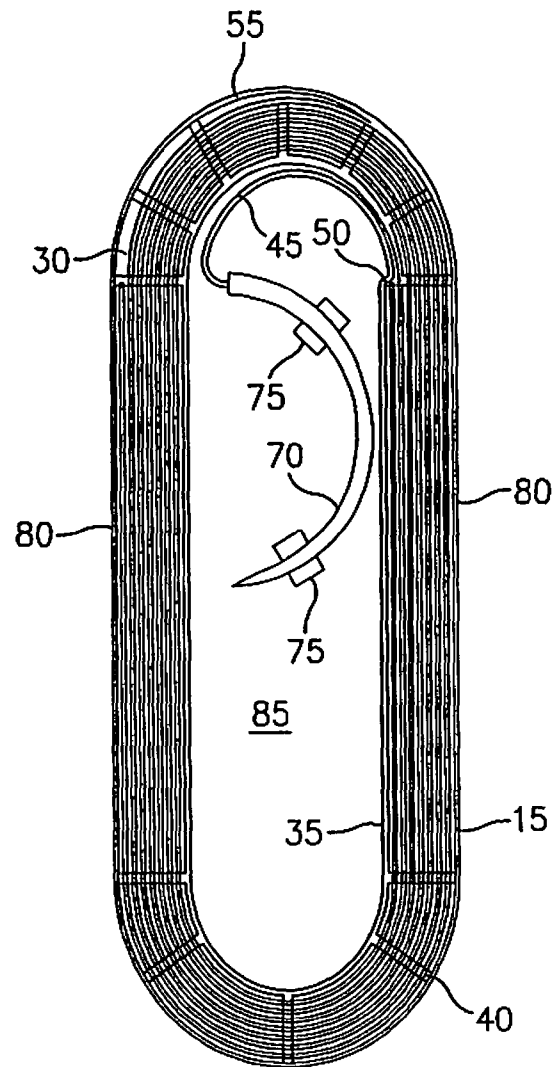


FIG. 1A

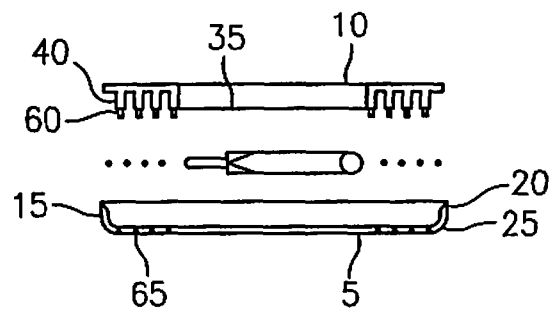


FIG. 1B

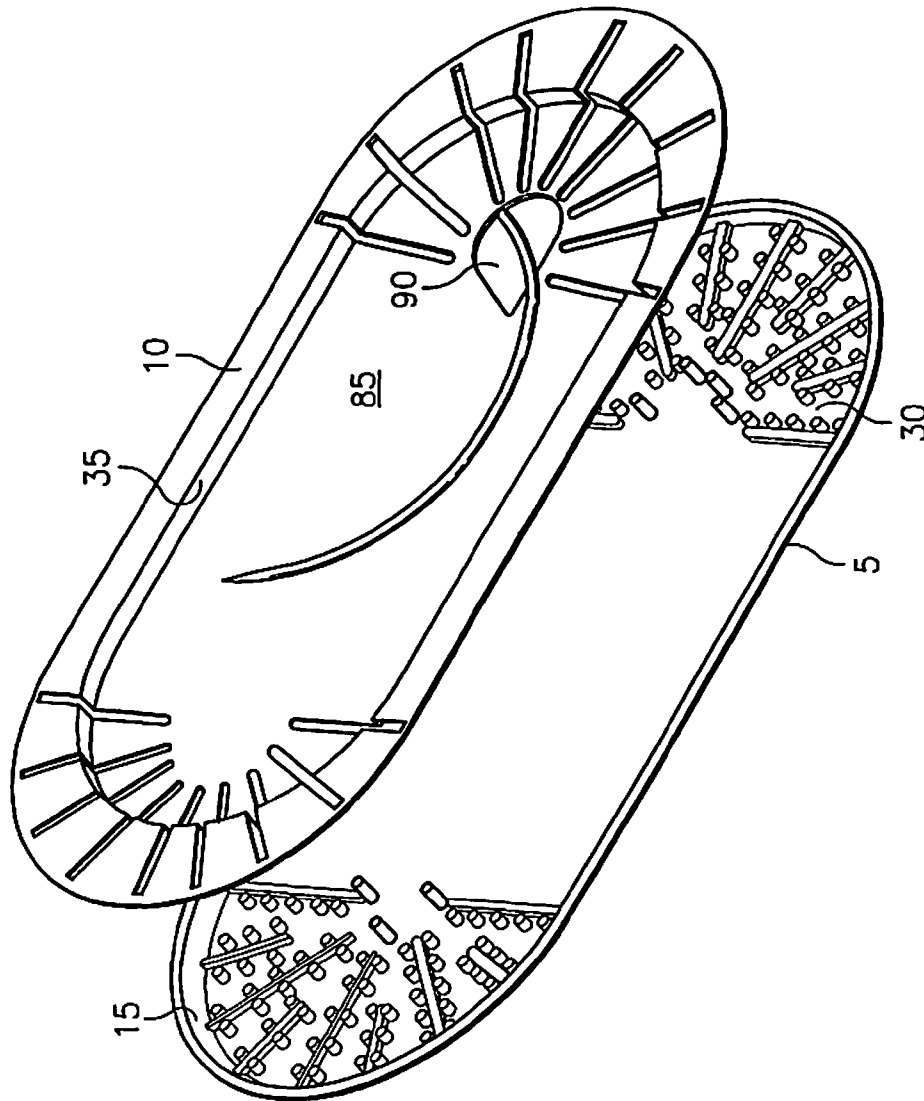


FIG. 1C

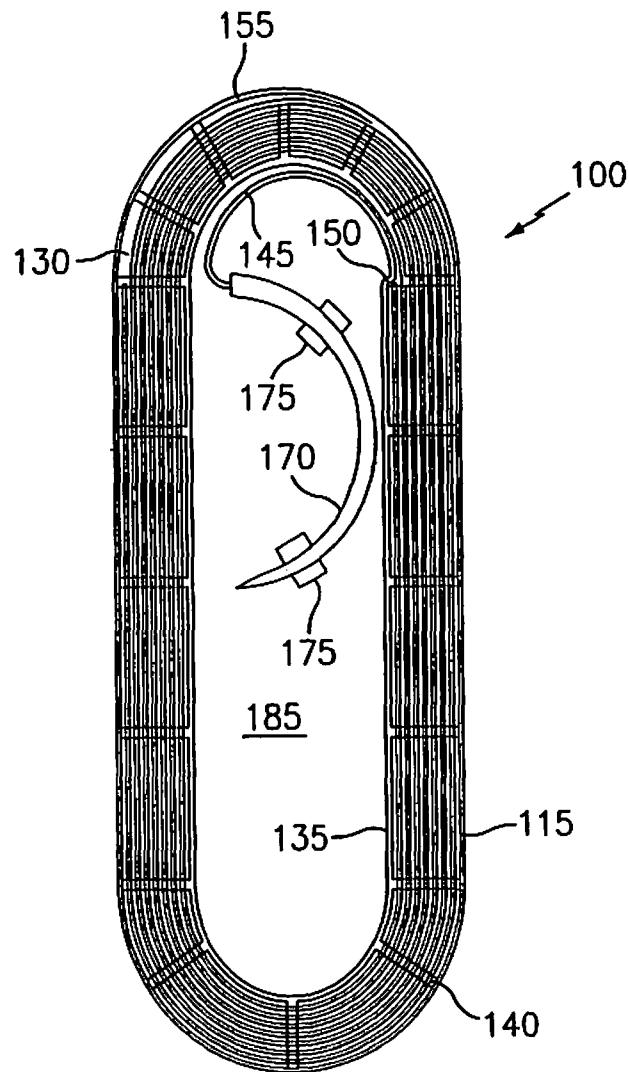


FIG. 2A

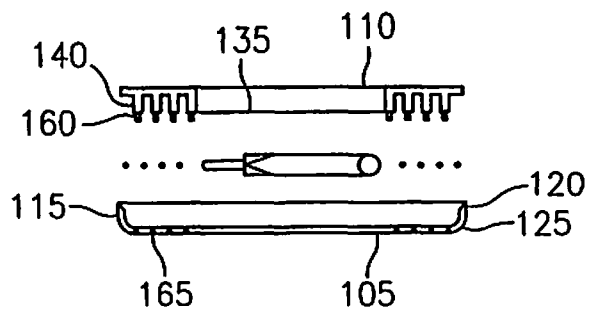


FIG. 2B

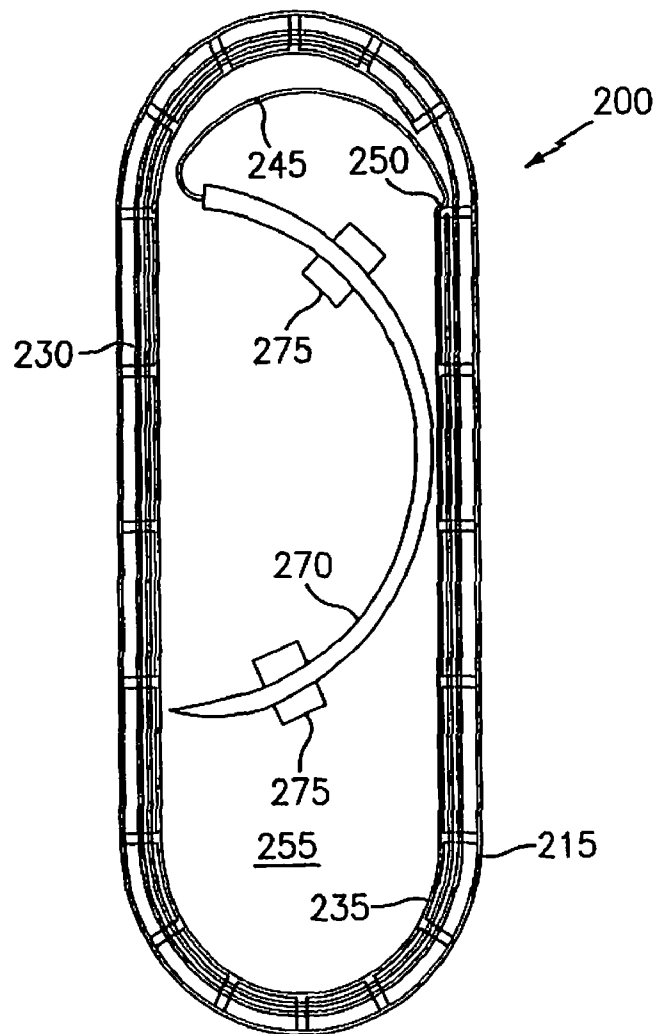


FIG. 3A

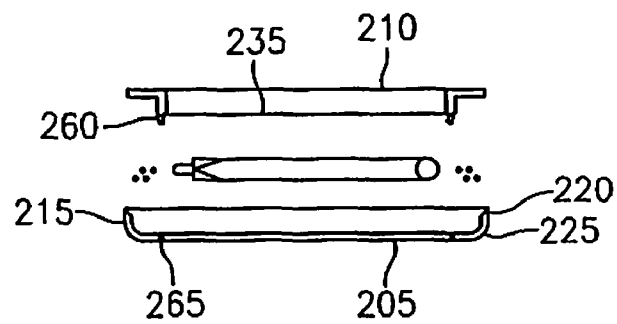


FIG. 3B

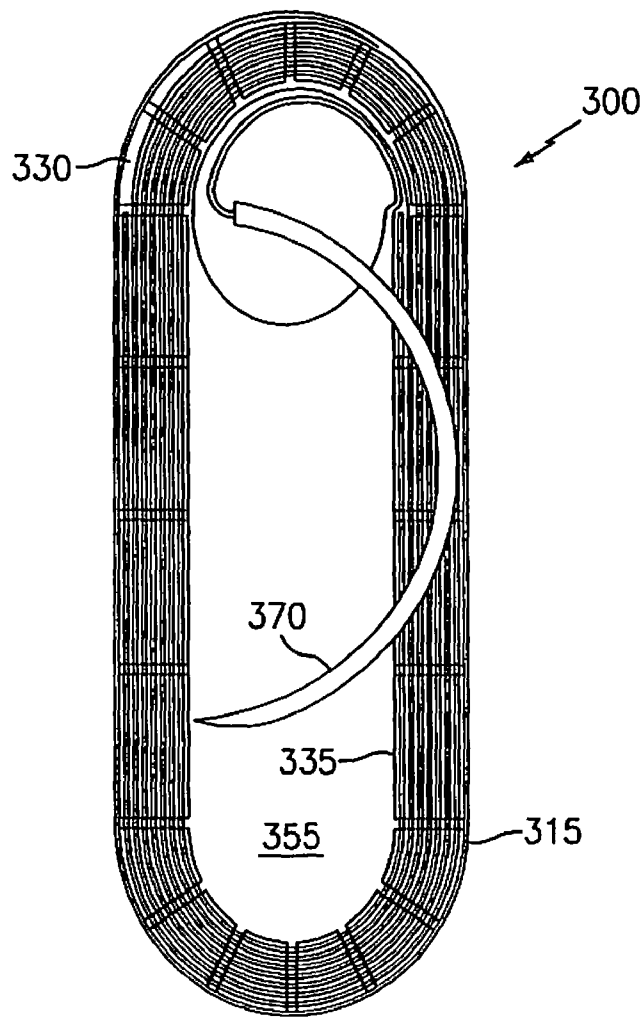


FIG. 4A

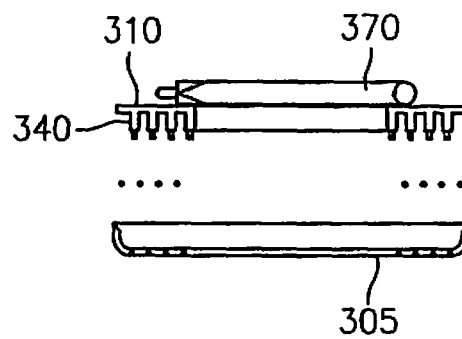


FIG. 4B

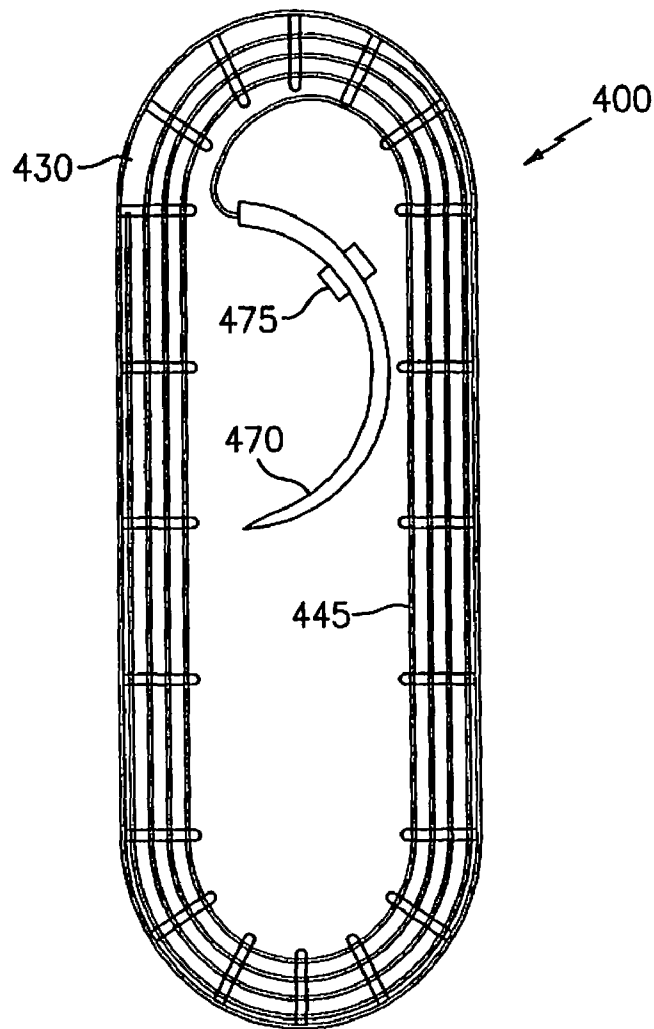


FIG. 5A

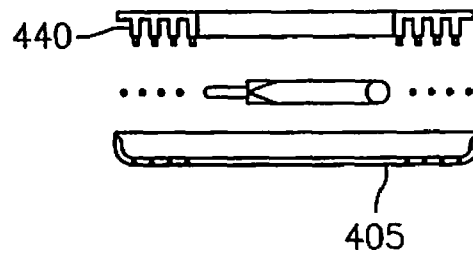


FIG. 5B

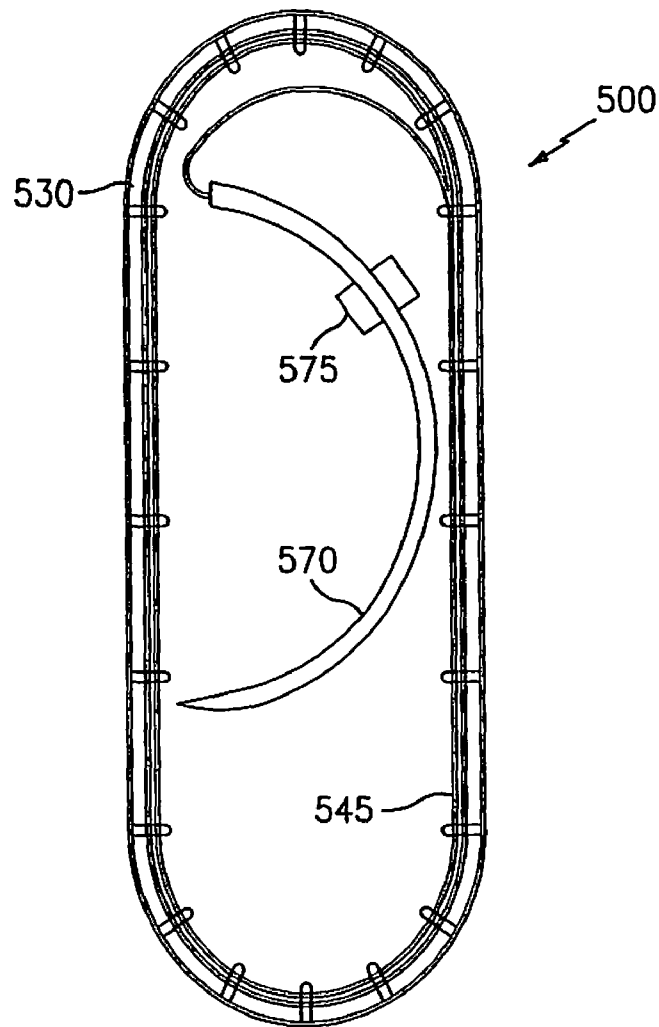


FIG. 6A

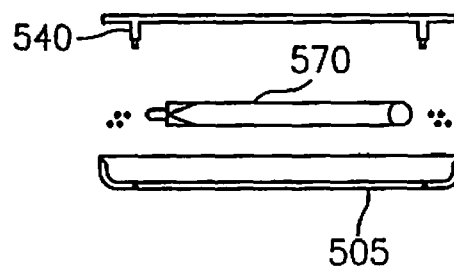


FIG. 6B

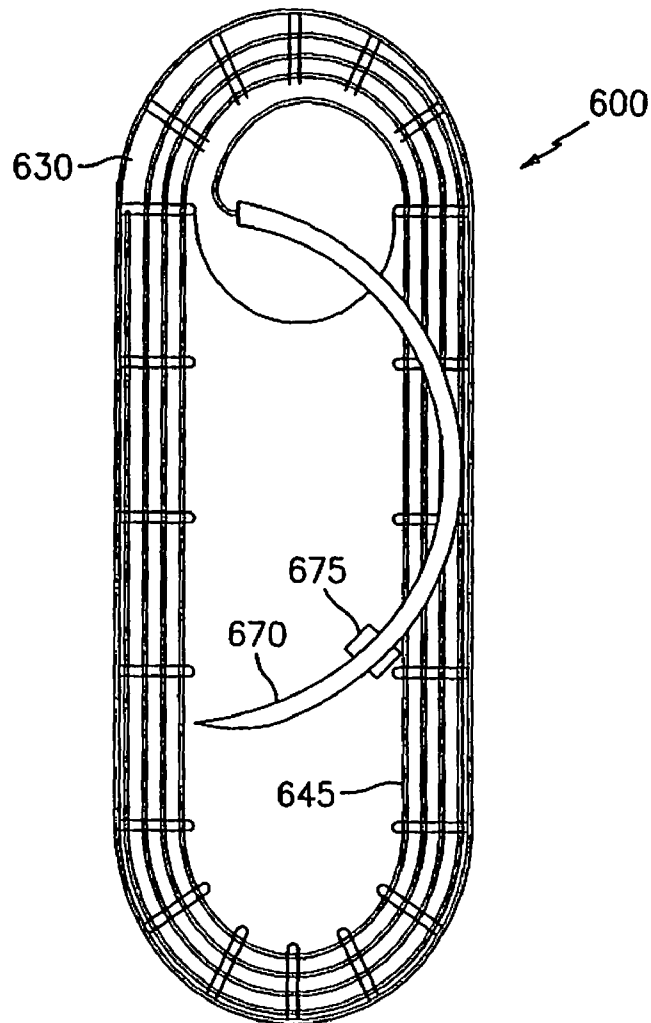


FIG. 7A

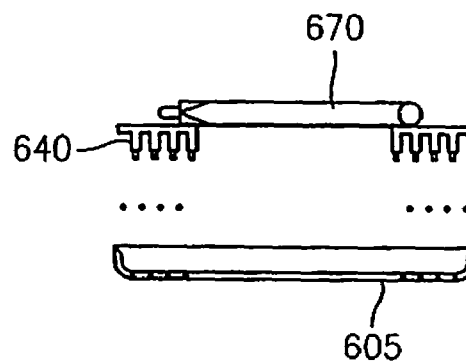
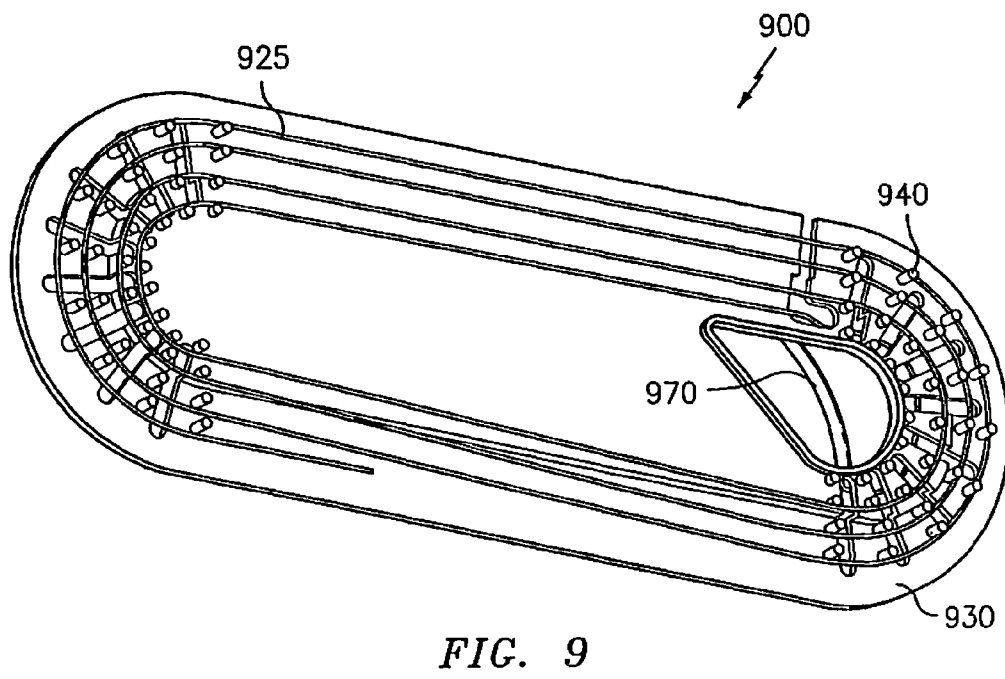
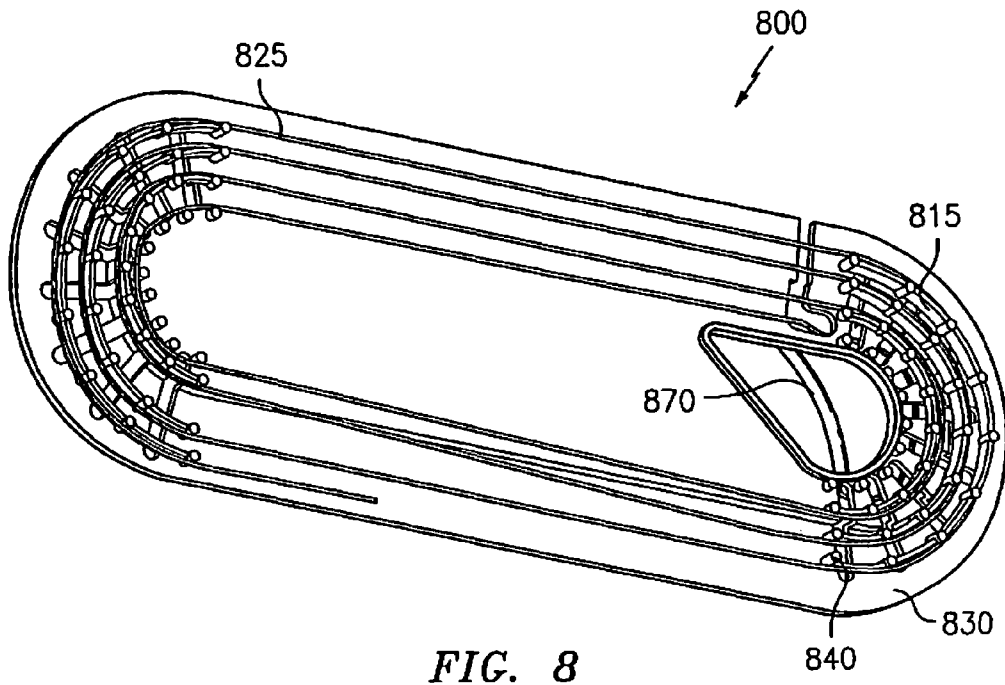


FIG. 7B



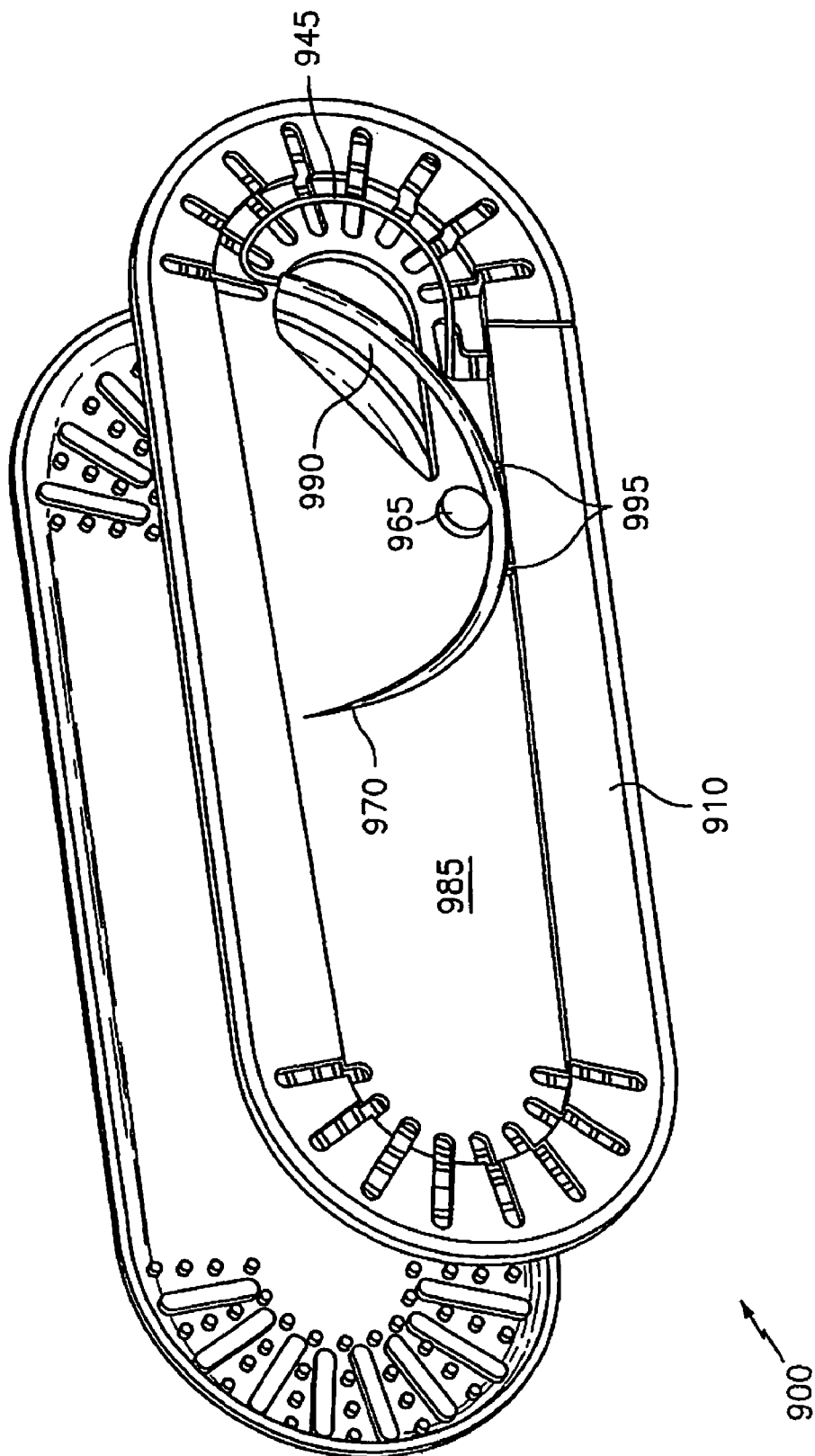


FIG. 10

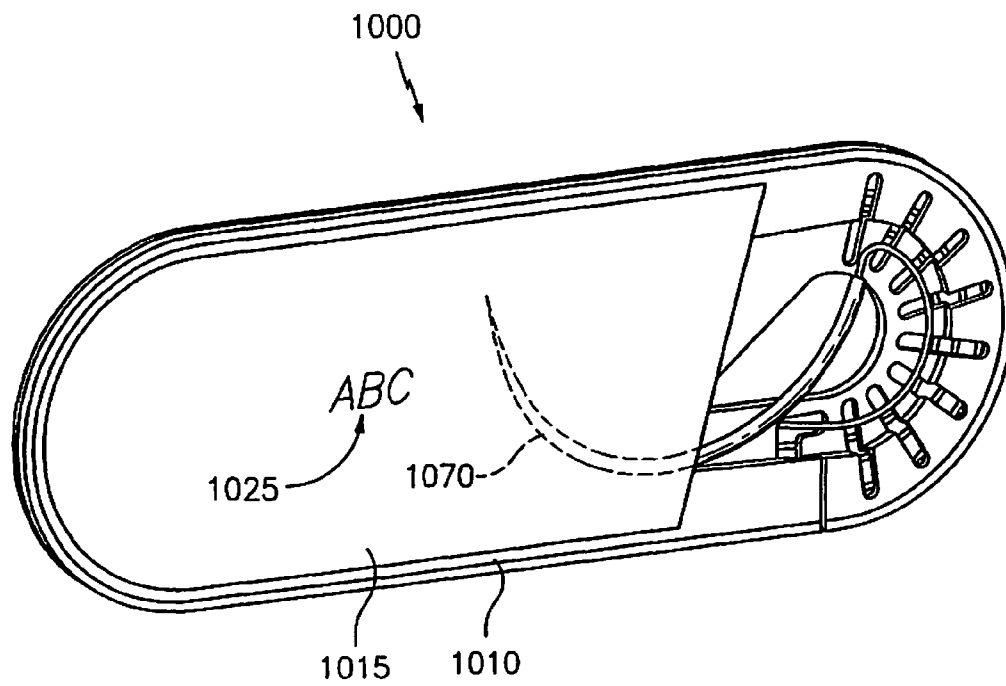


FIG. 11

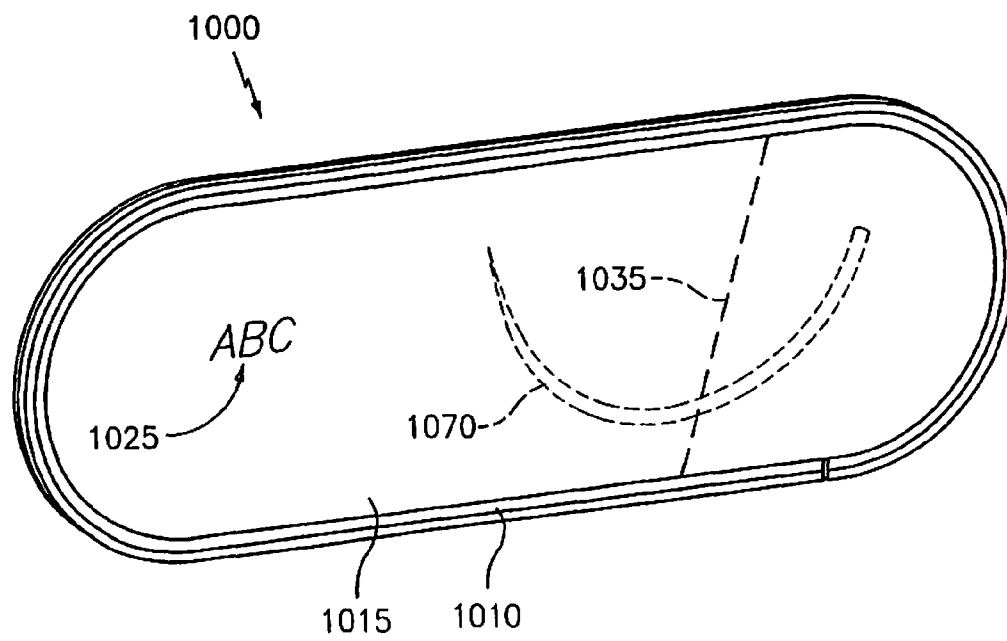


FIG. 12

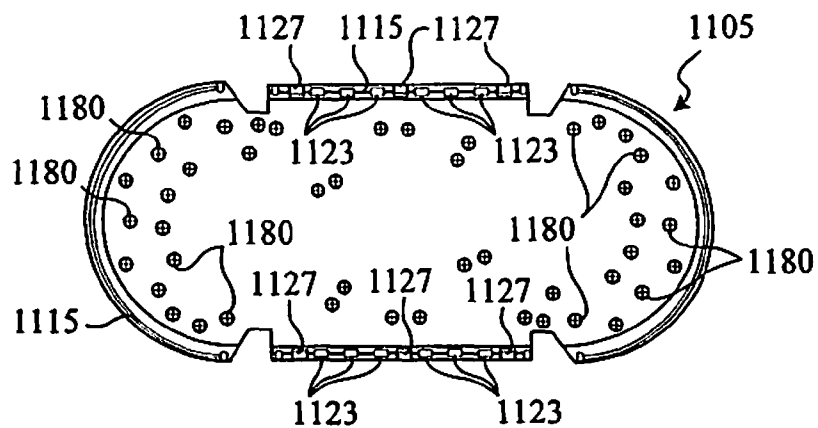


FIG. 13

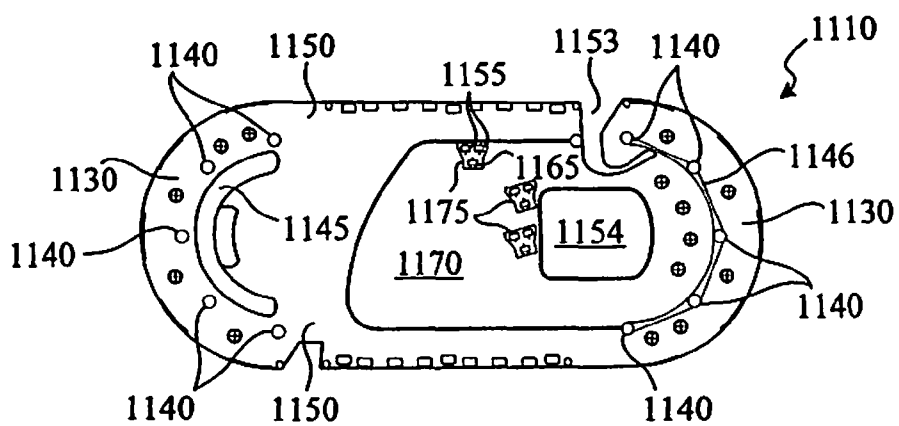


FIG. 14

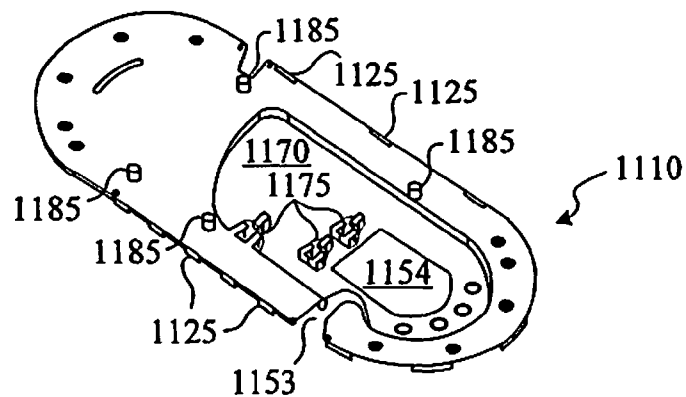


FIG. 15

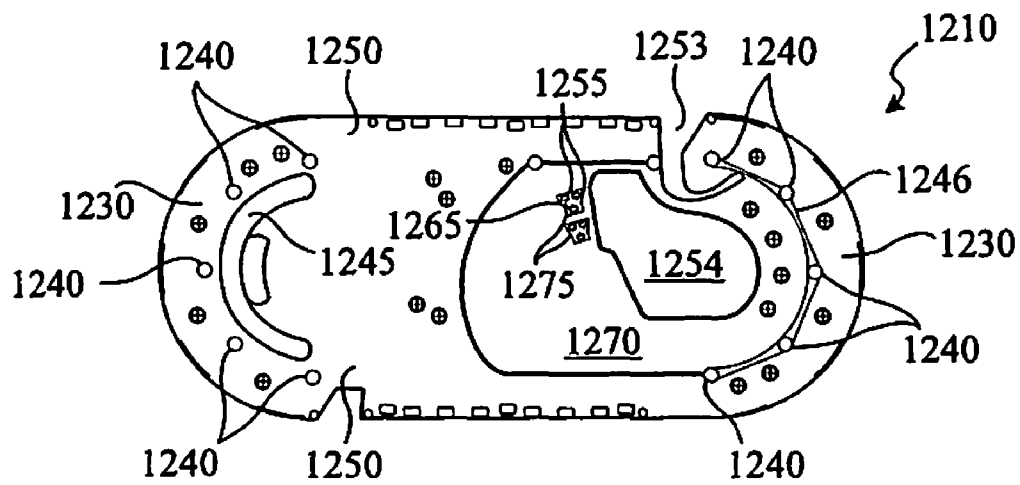


FIG. 16

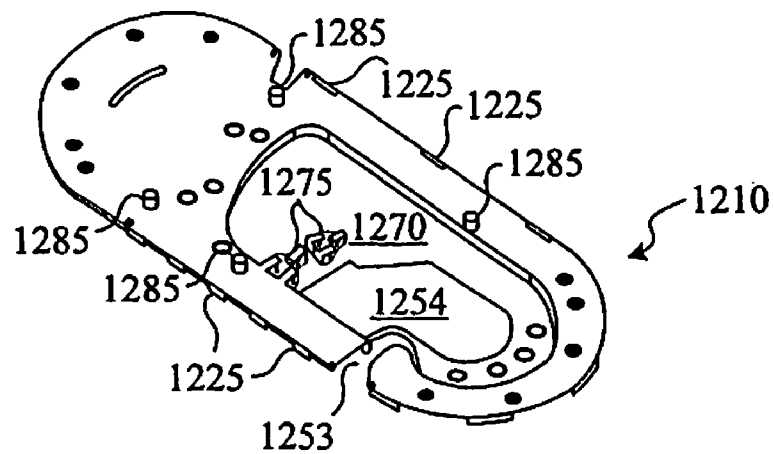


FIG. 17

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SUTURE PACKAGING

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 11/400,686, filed Apr. 7, 2006, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/891,604, filed Jul. 15, 2004, now U.S. Pat. No. 7,520,382, which claims benefit of and priority to U.S. Provisional Application No. 60/488,464, filed Jul. 18, 2003, the disclosures of each being incorporated in their entirety herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

1. Technical Field

The present disclosure relates to packages for surgical sutures, and more particularly to methods and apparatus for packaging surgical sutures.

2. Discussion of Related Art

A common form of surgical suture package is made of a folded stiff treated paper suture holder contained in a sterile, hermetically sealed envelope. This envelope is further sealed in a second, usually clear, thermoplastic heat-sealed envelope outer wrap to maintain the sterility of suture holder and inner envelope. When the suture is to be used, the outer clear wrap is opened, typically in the operating room, and the sealed sterile inner envelope is placed in a sterile area. Operating room personnel then open the inner envelope when access to the suture is needed.

Packages for surgical sutures having needles attached at one or both ends are constructed according to the nature of the suture material and to how the sutures will be used. Generally, the package holds the suture and attached needles in place, protects them during handling and storage, and allows ready access to the suture for removal with minimum handling at the time the suture is to be used.

An important aspect of the design and manufacture of suture packages is that the suture should be removable without becoming entangled with itself, kinked, coiled or bound in undesired ways. The nature of the suture material itself may impose limitations on the configuration of the package, how the suture is placed within the package, the placement of the needles, or how the suture is drawn from the package.

An exemplary packaging for surgical suture material is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,076,659. The '659 patent discloses a packaging for surgical suture material which has a base from which a wall extends in a spiral manner. The wall defines a suture duct within the area defined by the base. The suture duct opens at its first end into a suture-removal area. A cover is located above the suture duct. The spiral wall is provided on its outward-facing side with suture-deflector protrusions spaced apart from one another in the course of the suture duct.

A drawback in the case of the previously known packaging for surgical suture material is that, when the surgical suture material is being removed, the suture can pull tight in the suture retaining area in which it is guided over several spiral turns. That is, in the attempt to remove the suture from the packaging, the direction of the pulling force often causes the suture to move toward locations within the packaging which could cause the suture to become bound.

For example, the suture can move within the suture retaining area into an area which is formed by a junction between the wall extending like a spiral and the cover. The suture retaining area is defined by the spiral wall, the base and the cover. However, the wall in the suture package in the '659

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patent, as well as many other prior art suture packages, extends from the bottom of the package toward the cover. Thus, a gap is frequently formed at a location which is defined by the junction of the wall and the cover. It is not uncommon for the suture to become wedged in the gap, thereby making further removal of the surgical suture material much more difficult or impossible.

The ability to readily access sutures and efficiently retrieve the sutures from their packaging is of utmost importance, especially when time is of the essence during a surgical procedure. Although apparatus and methods that adequately provide packaging for surgical suture material are known, the problems associated with the sutures becoming bound or otherwise caught within the suture package have not been entirely eliminated. Thus, a continuing need exists for improved suture packages which virtually eliminate any possibility of the suture becoming entangled or caught within the suture package.

SUMMARY

A package for at least one surgical suture is provided. The package includes a base and a cover. The cover is configured to be placed adjacent to the base to form the package for at least one surgical suture. The cover defines an opening therein to provide access to a needle and suture contained within the package. The package also includes an outer wall extending from an outer circumference of the base. The outer wall has a predetermined height such that the outer wall meets the cover when the cover is placed adjacent to the base. The outer wall defines an outer periphery of a suture retainer area. The package also includes a needle park located on an upper surface of the cover for maintaining a needle connected to an end of the surgical suture in a fixed position, a platform extending from a bottom surface of the cover, the platform having a peripheral wall for at least partially defining an inner periphery of the suture retainer area, and a plurality of posts extending from first and second arcuate end portions of a lower surface of the cover to define an inner periphery of arcuate end portions of the suture retainer area. At least two of the plurality of posts are joined by webbing and the posts are dimensioned and configured to engage holes formed in the base to secure the cover to the base. Further, the package includes a plurality of posts extending from an upper surface of the cover configured for heat staking a label to the cover.

A package for surgical suture material is also provided. The package includes a base and a cover. The cover is configured to be placed adjacent to the base to form the package for surgical suture material and including a plurality of posts extending from an outer surface thereof configured for receiving an information label. The package may further include an information label heat staked to the cover. The package may also include an outer wall extending from an outer circumference of the base, the outer wall having a predetermined height such that the outer wall meets the cover when the cover is placed adjacent the base. A plurality of discrete protrusions may be formed on the outer wall and be configured and dimensioned to maintain the surgical suture material a predetermined distance from the outer wall such that the surgical suture material is removed from a juncture formed by the outer wall and the cover upon assembly of the package. The protrusions may extend inwardly toward the center portion of the package.

In one embodiment, the suture package may further include a needle park for maintaining a needle in a fixed position, wherein the needle is connected to an end of a suture which is positioned within the suture retaining area. The

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needle park may be located on an upper surface of the cover and/or on the upper surface of the base. The needle park may include three cantilevered members that provide a three-point contact with the needle. The needle park may be flexible to accommodate needles having different curvatures. A plurality of posts may extend from a bottom surface of the cover to form at least one suture retaining area.

In another embodiment, a needle is attached to an end of the suture material is positioned within a central region of the base, as defined by the at least one suture retaining area, such that the needle engages a needle park to maintain the needle in a fixed position. At least one suture retaining area may be further defined by a wall extending from a lower surface of the cover. The cover may have a circumference dimension which is substantially equal to a circumference dimension of the base.

Additionally, provided is a suture package including a base, a cover having a lower surface and an upper surface configured to attach to the base to define an area configured to retain a suture and a label heat staked to at least a portion of the upper surface of the cover.

Also provided is a method of assembling a suture package. The method includes positioning a cover of a suture package with the lower side facing upward, winding a suture onto the lower side of the cover, positioning a base over the lower side of the cover to at least partially cover the suture, securing the base to the cover and attaching an information label to an upper side of the cover. Attaching an information label to an upper side of the cover may include heat staking the label to the cover. The cover may include a plurality of posts for heat staking the label to the cover.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate embodiments of the disclosure and, together with a general description of the disclosure given above, and the detailed description of the embodiments given below, serve to explain the principles of the disclosure.

FIG. 1A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 1B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package illustrated in FIG. 1A;

FIG. 1C is a perspective view of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 2B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package illustrated in FIG. 2A;

FIG. 3A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 3B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package illustrated in FIG. 3A;

FIG. 4A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package having an external needle park in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 4B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package having an external needle park illustrated in FIG. 4A;

FIG. 5A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 5B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package illustrated in FIG. 5A;

FIG. 6A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 6B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package illustrated in FIG. 6A;

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FIG. 7A is a top view of an embodiment of a suture package having an external needle park in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 7B is a side cross-sectional view of the suture package having an external needle park illustrated in FIG. 7A;

FIG. 8 is a perspective view of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 9 is a perspective view of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 10 is a perspective view of a suture package having a needle park in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 11 is a perspective view of a suture package having an information label attached to an upper surface of the cover of the suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 12 is a perspective view of a suture package having an information label attached to an upper surface of the cover of the suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 13 is a top view of a suture package cover in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 14 is a top view of an inside surface of a suture package base in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 15 is a perspective view of an outside surface of a suture package base in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure;

FIG. 16 is a top view of an inside surface of a suture package base in accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure; and

FIG. 17 is a perspective view of an outside surface of a suture package base in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE EMBODIMENTS

Embodiments of the presently disclosed suture package and method therefor will now be described in detail with reference to the figures, in which like reference numerals identify corresponding elements throughout the several views.

Referring now to FIGS. 1A and 1B, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The package has a base 5 and a cover 10. An outside wall 15 rises from base 5 and extends like an oval around a circumference of base 5. Outside wall 15 has an upper rim 20 and a lower rim 25. Lower rim 25 is connected to the base 5. Outside wall 15 is designed having a predetermined height such that upper rim 20 engages cover 10, preferably at the circumference thereof. Thus, when base 5 and cover 10 are moved adjacent each other, the outer circumference of cover 10 is joined with the upper rim 20 of outside wall 15 to form an outer wall of the closed suture package.

A suture retaining area 30 is defined on an outer boundary by outside wall 15, and on an inner boundary by an inner or interior wall 35. In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure, interior wall 35 preferably extends downward from cover 10. Unlike outside wall 15, interior wall 35 is not a continuous loop. Instead, interior wall 35 has a first end and a second end which will be described in further detail below. Adjacent to the first end of interior wall 35, an opening is defined which allows a first end of a suture 45 to enter into the suture retaining area 30. Interior wall 35 is also configured

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to follow the shape of the suture retaining area 30. Thus, at the point of the opening formed by interior wall 35, the end of the interior wall 35 is offset from any other portion of interior wall 35. This offset is necessary to maintain the shape of the suture retaining area 30 and to provide an opening for the suture 45 to access the suture retaining area 30.

Alternatively, it is contemplated that interior wall 35 may define an outer boundary of a plateau region in the center of cover 10. The height of the plateau region (also referred to as suture-removal area 85) is configured to be equivalent to the height of suture retaining area protrusions 40 less the thickness of a needle 70. Accordingly, a needle 70 may be positioned on the plateau in suture-removal area 85, on the outside surface of cover 10. In the case wherein it is desired to park the needle on the exterior of the suture package, a spacer may be placed on the plateau in suture-removal area 85. In an alternative embodiment, interior wall 35 defines an oval opening within cover 10. In that case, it is preferred that a needle park 75 is attached to base 5 within the suture-removal area 85. Therefore, surgical personnel have the ability to access and remove needle 70 through the opening within cover 10.

Extending downward from cover 10 is structure that partitions the suture package into one or more suture retaining areas. More specifically, a plurality of sets of four suture retaining area protrusions 40 defines a corresponding number of suture retaining areas. The sets of suture retaining area protrusions 40 are displaced radially from a center of the cover 10. It is also contemplated that the sets of suture retaining area protrusions may be configured as more or less than four retaining area protrusions such that more or less suture retaining areas are defined. Additionally, it is contemplated that the suture retaining area protrusions may be configured as one or more continuous walls which define one or more suture retaining areas.

Suture retaining area protrusions 40 are elongated finger members having a height which is substantially equivalent to the height of outside wall 15. Suture retaining area protrusions 40 are connected on a first end to the bottom surface of cover 10. A second end of suture retaining area protrusions 40 has a post 60 extending therefrom. Posts 60 are dimensioned to fit within holes 65 which are formed in base 5. Holes 65 may also be dimples or recesses. Posts 60 may also be heat staked or otherwise welded to base 5 to secure the cover 10 to the base 5. As cover 10 and base 5 are joined together, posts 60 extending from suture retaining area protrusions 40 engage holes 65 which are defined by base 5. This arrangement provides structural support to the suture package. The ends of the protrusions 40 may, alternatively, be deformed in the manner of rivets after the cover 10 has been fitted onto the base 5 with the wall 15. Other and/or additional types of connection between the wall 15 and the cover 10 are possible. Thus, e.g., the use of catches, which project at the periphery of the cover 10 and engage with suitable counterparts at the wall 15, is conceivable.

Also, as a result of the fit between the suture retaining area protrusions 40 and the holes 65 in base 5, the possibility of a surgical suture sticking in the region wherein the suture retaining area protrusions 40 meet base 5, as the suture is being removed from the packaging, is reliably avoided.

More specifically, since, in a particularly useful embodiment, the suture is removed through the cover, there will be a tendency for the suture to move in the direction of the cover 10, which is away from any gap which may form at the junction of the suture retaining area protrusions 40 and base 5. Thus, this configuration will further an objective of this disclosure, that is, to increase the reliability of the removability of the suture. Although the alternative embodiments

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described herein include various structural differences, a common feature of each of the embodiments is that the structure which forms the suture retaining areas extends from a bottom surface of the cover.

The suture retaining area protrusions 40 define the suture retaining areas 30 on the bottom of cover 10. The embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B includes a plurality of sets of four suture retaining area protrusions 40 extending radially outward between interior wall 35 and outside wall 15. Thus, a suture retaining area 30 defines and provides for four revolutions of suture 45. Also, in this embodiment, the suture retaining area protrusions 40 are only positioned in the end sections of the suture package. The two straight sides 80 of the suture package do not contain any protrusions. Thus, suture 45 is not restrained within defined retaining areas as the suture traverses each of the two sides 80.

A first end 50 of the suture retaining area 30 opens into a suture-removal area 85 which, in the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 1A and 1B is arranged in the zone surrounded by the suture retaining area 30. The second end 55 of the suture retaining area 30 is closed, see FIG. 1A. The suture retaining area 30 is closed to the bottom by base 5.

Prior to being placed within a suture package, the suture is typically attached to a needle to provide a suture-needle combination. That is, a needle 70 is fitted onto an end of the suture 45. A needle park assembly 75 is provided within the central section of the suture-removal area 5 on an outer surface of cover 10 or an inner surface of base 5. The structure of needle park assembly 75 may be known to one having ordinary skill in the art. See, for example, U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,481,569, 5,788,062, 5,472,081, 5,180,053, 5,131,533, 5,099,994, and 4,424,898. It is contemplated that cover 10 includes an opening which permits free access to the suture-removal area 85. The opening may be a partial opening in the cover, or a more extensive opening, the advantages of each of which will be described below. Surgical personnel can gain access to the needle and suture through the opening in cover 10 and remove the needle suture combination by disengaging needle 70 from needle park 75 and then pulling the suture 45 from suture retaining area 30. It is to be noted that the needle 70 is positioned within the inner space defined by the suture 45. This configuration further assists in the removal of the needle-suture combination from the package.

FIG. 1C illustrates a perspective view of an embodiment of a suture package in accordance with the present disclosure. Illustrated in FIG. 1C are base 5 and cover 10. A needle 70 is shown positioned within a recessed suture-removal area 85 of cover 10. Thus, needle 70 is positioned on an exterior surface of the suture package. It is also contemplated that needle 70 may reside on base 5. In that case, the needle 70 may be retrieved from the suture package through an opening defined in cover 10 which is larger than opening 90.

Suture-removal area 85 is defined on an outer circumference by interior wall 35 which extends from a bottom surface of cover 10. Also extending from the bottom surface of cover 10 is a plurality of suture retaining area protrusions 40. When cover 10 is placed against base 5, suture retaining area protrusions 40 engage holes 65 formed in base 5.

As discussed with reference to FIGS. 1A and 1B, a suture retaining area 30 is defined on an outer boundary by outside wall 15, and an inner boundary by interior wall 35. At the end portion of the suture package, suture retaining area 30 is divided into two or more separate retaining areas by suture retaining area protrusions 40.

Referring now to FIGS. 2A and 2B, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package 100 in accordance with an

embodiment of the present disclosure. The package has a base **105** and a cover **110**. An outside wall **115** rises from base **105** and extends like an oval around a circumference of base **105**. Outside wall **115** has an upper rim **120** and a lower rim **125**. Lower rim **125** is connected to the base **105**. Outside wall **115** is designed having a predetermined height such that upper rim **120** engages cover **110**, preferably at the circumference thereof. Thus, when base **105** and cover **110** are moved adjacent each other, the outer circumference of cover **110** is joined with the upper rim **120** of outside wall **115** to form an outer wall of the closed suture package **100**.

A suture retaining area **130** is defined on an outer boundary by outside wall **115**, and on an inner boundary by an inner or interior wall **135**. In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure, interior wall **135** preferably extends downward from cover **110**. Unlike outside wall **115**, interior wall **135** is not a continuous loop. Instead, interior wall **135** has a first end and a second end which will be described in further detail below. Adjacent to the first end of interior wall **135**, an opening is defined which allows a first end of a suture **145** to enter into the suture retaining area **130**. Interior wall **135** is also configured to follow the shape of the suture retaining area **130**. Thus, at the point of the opening formed by interior wall **135**, the end of the interior wall **135** is offset from any other portion of wall **135**. This offset is necessary to maintain the shape of the suture retaining area **130** and to provide an opening for the suture **145** to access the suture retaining area **130**.

Extending downward from cover **110** is structure which partitions the suture package into one or more suture retaining areas. More specifically, a plurality of sets of four suture retaining area protrusions **140** defines a corresponding number of suture retaining areas. The sets of suture retaining area protrusions **140** are displaced radially from a center of the cover **105**. It is also contemplated that the sets of suture retaining area protrusions may be configured as more or less than four retaining area protrusions such that more or less suture retaining areas are defined. Additionally, it is contemplated that the suture retaining area protrusions may be configured as one or more continuous walls which define one or more suture retaining areas.

Suture retaining area protrusions **140** are elongated finger members having a height which is substantially equivalent to the height of outside wall **115**. Suture retaining area protrusions **140** are connected on a first end to the bottom surface of cover **110**. A second end of suture retaining area protrusion **140** has a post **160** extending therefrom. Posts **160** are dimensioned to fit within holes **165** which are formed in base **105**. Holes **165** may also be dimples or recesses. Posts **160** may also be heat staked or otherwise welded to base **105** to secure the cover **110** to the base **105**. As cover **110** and base **105** are joined together, posts **160** extending from suture retaining area protrusions **140** engage holes **165** which are defined by base **105**. This arrangement provides structural support to the suture package. The ends of the protrusions **140** may, alternatively, be deformed in the manner of rivets after the cover **110** has been fitted onto the base **105** with the wall **115**. Other and/or additional types of connection between the wall **115** and the cover **110** are possible. Thus, e.g., the use of catches, which project at the periphery of the cover **110** and engage with suitable counterparts at the wall **115**, is conceivable.

Also, as a result of the fit between the suture retaining area protrusions **140** and the holes **165** in base **105**, the possibility of a surgical suture sticking in the region wherein the suture retaining area protrusions **140** meet base **105**, as the suture is being removed from the packaging, is reliably avoided.

More specifically, since, in the preferred embodiment, the suture is removed through the cover, there will be a tendency for the suture to move in the direction of the cover **110**, which is away from any gap which may form at the junction of the suture retaining area protrusions **140** and base **105**. Thus, this configuration will further an objective of this embodiment, that is, to increase the reliability of the removability of the suture. Although the alternative embodiments described herein include various structural differences, a common feature of each of the embodiments is that the structure which forms the suture retaining areas extends from a bottom surface of the cover.

The suture retaining area protrusions **140** define the suture retaining areas **130** on the bottom of cover **110**. The embodiment illustrated in FIGS. 2A and 2B includes a plurality of sets of four suture retaining area protrusions **140** extending radially outward between interior wall **135** and outside wall **115**. Thus, a suture retaining area **130** defines and provides for four revolutions of suture **145**.

A first end **150** of the suture retaining area **130** opens into a suture-removal area **185** which in the embodiments illustrated in FIGS. 2A and 2B is arranged in the zone surrounded by the suture retaining area **130**. The second end **155** of the suture retaining area **130** is closed, see FIG. 2A. The suture retaining area **130** is closed to the bottom by base **105**.

Prior to being placed within a suture package, the suture is typically attached to a needle to provide a needle-suture-combination. That is, a needle **170** is fitted onto an end of the suture **145**. A needle park assembly **175** is provided within the central section of the suture-removal area **185** on an outer surface of cover **110** or an inner surface of base **105**. Cover **110** includes an opening which permits free access to the suture-removal area **185**. Surgical personnel can gain access to the needle and suture through the opening in cover **110** and remove the suture by disengaging needle **170** from needle park **175** and then pulling the suture **145** from suture retaining area **130**. It is to be noted that the needle **170** is positioned within the inner space defined by the suture **145**. This configuration further assists in the removal of the suture from the package.

FIGS. 3A and 3B illustrate a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package **200** in accordance with another embodiment of the present disclosure. The package has a base **205** and a cover **210**. An outside wall **215** rises from base **205** and extends like an oval around a circumference of base **205**. Outside wall **215** has an upper rim **220** and a lower rim **225**. Lower rim **225** is connected to the base **205**. Outside wall **215** is designed having a predetermined height such that upper rim **220** engages cover **210**, preferably at the circumference thereof. Thus, when base **205** and cover **210** are moved adjacent each other, the outer circumference of cover **210** is joined with the upper rim **220** of outside wall **215** to form an outer wall of the closed suture package **200**.

An oval suture retaining area **230** is defined on an outer boundary by outside wall **215**, and on an inner boundary by an interior wall **235**. In accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure, interior wall **235** preferably extends downward from cover **210**. Unlike outside wall **215**, interior wall **235** is not a continuous loop. Instead, interior wall **235** has a first end **250** and a second end **255**. Adjacent to the first end **250**, an opening is defined which allows a first end of a suture **245** to enter into the oval suture retaining area **230**. Additionally, a gap is maintained between the first and second ends **250**, **255** to provide access of a needle **270** to a region in the center of the suture winding.

Interior wall **235** includes a plurality of posts **260** spaced apart and extending therefrom. The height of interior wall **235** is substantially equivalent to the height of outside wall **215**. Posts **260** are dimensioned to fit within holes **265** which are formed in base **205**. Holes **265** may also be dimples or recesses. Therefore, as cover **210** and base **205** are joined together, posts **260** extending from interior wall engage holes **265** which are defined by base **205**. This arrangement provides structural support to the suture package. The posts **260** may, alternatively, be deformed in the manner of rivets after the cover **210** has been fitted onto the base **205** with the wall **215**. Other and/or additional types of connection between the wall **215** and the cover **210** are possible. Thus, e.g., the use of catches, which project at the periphery of the cover **210** and engage with suitable counterparts at the wall **215**, is conceivable.

Prior to being placed within a suture package, needle **270** is fitted onto an end of the suture **245**. A needle park assembly **275** is provided within the central section of the suture-removal area **285** on the exterior surface of cover **210** or an inner surface of base **205**. Cover **210** includes an opening which permits free access to the suture-removal area **285**. Surgical personnel can gain access to the needle and suture through the opening in cover **210** and remove the suture by disengaging needle **270** from needle park **275** and then pulling the suture **245** from suture retaining area **230**.

Referring now to FIGS. **4A** and **4B**, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package **300** having an external needle park in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The suture package **300** is similar to the suture package described above with reference to FIGS. **2A** and **2B** with an exception being the location of the needle park. That is, instead of positioning the needle park assembly on the upper surface of base **305**, within the central region defined by the suture winding retaining areas **330**, the needle **370** and needle park assembly **375** are positioned on the upper surface of cover **310**. This configuration makes the suture-needle combination more accessible to the surgical personnel. The surgical personnel would simply disengage the needle **370** from the needle park assembly **375** and apply a pulling force to pull the suture, which is attached to the needle.

A suture retaining area **330** is defined on an outer boundary by outside wall **315**, and on an inner boundary by an interior wall **335**, as described above with reference to FIGS. **2A** and **2B**. Interior wall **335** extends downward from cover **310**. Also extending downward from cover **310** is a plurality of sets of four suture retaining area protrusions **340** to define a corresponding number of suture retaining areas.

Referring now to FIGS. **5A** and **5B**, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package **400** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The suture package **400** is similar to the suture package described above with reference to FIGS. **2A** and **2B** with an exception being the absence of inner wall **135**. That is, instead of having a contiguous inner wall defining the inner boundary of the suture retaining area **430**, the inner boundary of suture retaining area **430** is defined by the plurality of suture retaining area protrusions **440**. Suture **445** is wound within the suture retaining area **430** defined by suture retaining area protrusions **440**. The needle **470** and needle park assembly **475** are positioned on the upper surface of base **405** within the central region defined by the suture retaining areas **430**.

Referring now to FIGS. **6A** and **6B**, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package **500** in accordance with an

embodiment of the present disclosure. The suture package **500** is similar to the suture package described above with reference to FIGS. **3A** and **3B** with an exception being the absence of inner wall **235**. That is, instead of having a contiguous inner wall defining the inner boundary of the suture retaining area **530**, the inner boundary of suture retaining area **530** is defined by a plurality of suture retaining area protrusions **540**. Suture **545** is wound within the suture retaining area **530** defined by suture retaining area protrusions **540**. The needle **570** and needle park assembly **575** are positioned on the upper surface of base **505** within the central region defined by the suture winding retaining areas **530**.

Referring now to FIGS. **7A** and **7B**, there is shown a top view and a side cross-sectional view, respectively, of an embodiment of a suture package **600** in accordance with an embodiment of the present disclosure. The suture package **600** is similar to the suture package described above with reference to FIGS. **4A** and **4B** with an exception being the absence of inner wall **335**. That is, instead of having a contiguous inner wall defining the inner boundary of the suture retaining area **630**, the inner boundary of suture retaining area **630** is defined by the plurality of suture retaining area protrusions **640**. Suture **645** is wound within the suture retaining area **630** defined by suture retaining area protrusions **640**. The needle **670** and needle park assembly **675** are positioned on the upper surface of cover **610** within the central region defined by the suture retaining areas **630**.

The packages described herein may be manufactured from conventional moldable materials. It is especially preferred to use polyolefin materials such as polyethylene and polypropylene, other thermoplastic materials, and polyester materials such as nylon, and equivalents thereof. Preferably, the presently described packages are injection molded, however, the packages may be formed by other conventional processes and equivalents thereof including thermo-forming. If desired, the packages may be manufactured as individual assemblies or components which are then assembled.

FIGS. **8** and **9** are perspective views of suture packages in accordance with embodiments of the present disclosure. The suture packages **800** and **900**, illustrated in FIGS. **8** and **9**, respectively, are similar to each other and to the suture package described above with reference to FIG. **1C**, with certain differences. The most significant difference is the addition of partitions **815** in the embodiment illustrated in FIG. **8**. Partitions **815** connect each row of suture retaining area protrusions **840**. Thus, instead of having individual suture retaining area protrusions **940**, partitions **815** connect the suture retaining area protrusions **840** in a manner which defines a contiguous wall to further define suture retaining areas **830**. Sutures **825** and **925** having needles **870** and **970** attached thereto are illustrated wound within suture retaining areas **830** and **930**. The partitions **815** enhance the connection between the cover and base to prevent suture binding. Additionally, benefits associated with the injection molding process are realized with the embodiment having partitions.

Referring now to FIG. **10**, prior to being placed within a suture package, the suture is typically attached to a needle to provide a needle-suture combination. That is, a needle **970** is fitted onto an end of the suture **945**. A needle park assembly **975** is provided within the central section of the suture-removal area **985** on a surface of cover **910**. Needle park assembly **975** includes a pair of fins **955** and a post **965**. Post **965** has a circular cross-section and fins **955** are flexible. Thus, in combination, the characteristics of fins **955** and post **965** provide a three-point contact with a needle **970** and allow needle park assembly **975** to accommodate needles having different curvatures.

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It is contemplated that cover **910** defines an opening **990** to provide unrestricted access for surgical personnel to the needle **970**. More specifically, opening **990** provides surgical personnel with the ability to insert a needle holder past the surface of the cover. Surgical personnel can gain access to the needle and suture through the opening **970** in cover **910** by disengaging needle **970** from needle park **975** and then pulling the suture **945** from suture retaining area.

Referring now to FIG. **11**, it is further contemplated that the assembled suture packaging **1000** is packed in a foil wrapper (not shown) as is known to one having ordinary skill in the art. Additionally, in a preferred embodiment, an information label **1015** is attached to an upper surface of the cover **1010**. The information label **1015** includes indicia **1025** which, at least in part, provides information regarding the contents of the suture package. It is preferred that the information label **1015** is attached to the cover **1010** via an adhesive around at least a portion of a perimeter of the label. When applying the adhesive, care should be exercised to keep the adhesive from coming into contact with the needle and/or suture. Information label **1015** is preferably formed of paper. A paper label is particularly useful as a moisture sink when bio-absorbable sutures are used. Information label **1015** illustrated in FIG. **11** does not completely cover the entire surface area of cover **1010**. Thus, the surgical personnel will have ready access to needle **1070** as well as the ability to quickly remove information label **1015**.

In contrast to the information label illustrated in FIG. **11**, the information label **1015** illustrated in FIG. **12** covers the entire surface area of cover **1010**. The paper information label **1015** includes a plurality of perforations **1035** to define a tear line in a predetermined location. The predetermined location corresponds to a location above and substantially perpendicular to the needle **1070** (shown in phantom) which is parked on the upper surface of the cover **1010**. The perforations **1035** guide the tear when the surgical personnel open the package and prevent the needle from tipping.

Referring now to FIGS. **13-17**, alternative suture package embodiments are disclosed which are configured to maintain the position of a suture while preventing the suture from being caught about the outer periphery of the package as the suture package base and cover are joined. Referring initially to FIGS. **13-16**, the suture package has a base **1105** and a cover **1110**. A wall **1115** rises from the oval-shaped circumference of base **1105**. When base **1105** and cover **1110** are assembled to form a complete suture package, the outer circumference of cover **1110** meets the upper rim of wall **1115**. Wall **1115** includes a plurality of protrusions **1123** extending inwardly toward a center portion of the suture package. The protrusions **1123** maintain the position of the suture at a predetermined distance toward the center of the suture package to prevent the suture from getting caught in the juncture of wall **1115** and cover **1110** during assembly of the package. Detents **1127** on wall **1115** snap into corresponding openings **1125** on the cover **1110** when the base and cover are assembled. Posts **1140** extend from the inner surface of cover **1110** through openings **1180** in base **1105** when the package is assembled. Cover **1110** and base **1105** are permanently joined by heat staking posts **1140**.

At each end of the suture package, the suture is retained in an area **1130** defined by wall **1115** and posts **1140**. Arcuate wall **1145** and wall **1146** joining posts **1140** are not intended to contact the suture, but rather improve the structural integrity of the package. Along each side of the package, there is a portion **1150** where the suture is not restrained by any structure on either cover **1110** or base **1105** from movement

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toward the central portion of the package. Opening **1153** in cover **1110** allows removal of the suture from the package.

Cover **1110** includes needle parks **1175** on the outer surface thereof. A needle of a suture-needle combination is positioned in needle park **1175** which includes three cantilevered members (**1155** and **1165**) that provide a three-point contact with the needle. See FIGS. **14** and **15**. A needle is positioned with two of the cantilevered members (labeled **1155** in FIG. **14**) on one side of the needle and a single cantilevered member **1165** on the other side of the needle. The single cantilevered member **1165** is not collinear with either of the two cantilevered members **1155**.

Referring again to FIG. **15**, a depressed area **1170** is provided on the outer surface of cover **1110** to accommodate needles positioned in needle parks **1175**. When positioned in the needle park, at least a portion of the needle is located over opening **1154** so that the needle can be grasped with a needle holder. A paper label (not shown) applied to the package covers at least a portion of depressed area **1170**. In addition to providing information about the product contained in the package, the paper label protects the outer package from piercing by the point of the needle(s). Posts **1185** on the outer surface of cover **1110** pass through the label and are heat staked to secure the paper label to the cover.

Referring now to FIGS. **16** and **17**, another embodiment of a suture package cover is disclosed, and is identified as reference numeral **1210**. At each end of the suture package cover **1210**, a suture is retained in an area **1230** which is defined by wall **1115** extending from base **1105** and posts **1240**. Arcuate wall **1245** and wall **1246** joining posts **1240** are not intended to contact the suture, but rather improve the structural integrity of the package. Along each side of the package, there is a portion **1250** where the suture is not restrained by any structure on either cover **1210** or base **1105** from movement toward the central portion of the package. Opening **1253** in cover **1110** allows removal of the suture from the package. The opening **1253** in cover **1210** is configured having different dimensions than opening **1153** in cover **1110**. The purpose of the various opening configurations is to accommodate various needle sizes and quantities.

Cover **1210** includes needle parks **1275** on the outer surface thereof. A needle of a suture-needle combination is positioned in needle park **1275** which includes three cantilevered members that provide a three-point contact with the needle. A needle is positioned with two of the cantilevered members (labeled **1255** in FIG. **16**) on one side of the needle and a single cantilevered member **1265** on the other side of the needle. The single cantilevered member **1265** is not collinear with either of the two cantilevered members **1255**.

A depressed area **1270** is provided on the outer surface of cover **1210** to accommodate needles positioned in needle parks **1275**. When positioned in the needle park, at least a portion of the needle is located over opening **1254** so that the needle can be grasped with a needle holder. A paper label (illustrated in FIGS. **11** and **12**) applied to the package covers at least a portion of depressed area **1270**. In addition to providing information about the product contained in the package, the paper label protects the outer package from piercing by the point of the needle(s). Posts **1285** on the outer surface of cover **1210** pass through the label and are heat staked to secure the paper label to the cover.

It will be understood that various modifications may be made to the embodiments disclosed herein. For example, although the above embodiments are described with reference to a surgical suture package, it is contemplated that the disclosure is not limited to such an application and may be applied to various medical instruments. Additionally,

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although the illustrative embodiments described herein disclose a single needle-suture combination within the package, it is contemplated that multiple sutures may be housed within a single suture package. As yet another example, rather than mounting the needle park to a surface of the cover, the needle park can be located on a surface of the base. As yet another example, rather than removing the suture-needle combination through an opening in the cover, it is contemplated that the suture-needle combination can be removed through an opening formed in the base. Therefore, the above description should not be construed as limiting, but merely as exemplifications of preferred embodiments. Those skilled in the art will envision other modifications within the scope and spirit of the claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A package for at least one surgical suture, the package comprising:

a base;

a cover configured to be placed adjacent to the base to form the package for the at least one surgical suture, wherein the cover defines an opening therein to provide access to a needle and suture contained within the package;

an outer wall extending from an outer circumference of the base, the outer wall having a predetermined height such that the outer wall meets the cover when the cover is placed adjacent to the base, wherein the outer wall defines an outer periphery of a suture retainer area;

a needle park located on an upper surface of the cover for maintaining a needle connected to an end of the surgical suture in a fixed position;

a platform extending from a bottom surface of the cover, the platform having a peripheral wall for at least partially defining an inner periphery of the suture retainer area;

a plurality of posts extending from first and second arcuate end portions of a lower surface of the cover to define an inner periphery of arcuate end portions of the suture retainer area, wherein at least two of the plurality of posts are joined by webbing, and further wherein the posts are dimensioned and configured to engage holes formed in the base to secure the cover to the base; and

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a plurality of posts extending from an upper surface of the cover configured for heat staking a label to the cover.

2. The package for surgical suture material of claim 1 further including an information label heat staked to the cover.

3. The package for surgical suture material of claim 1, further including a plurality of discrete protrusions formed on the outer wall and being configured and dimensioned to maintain the surgical suture material a predetermined distance from the outer wall such that the surgical suture material is removed from a juncture formed by the outer wall and the cover upon assembly of the package.

4. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 3, wherein the protrusions extend inwardly toward the center portion of the package.

5. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 1, wherein surgical suture material is wound within the suture retaining area.

6. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 5, wherein a needle is attached to an end of the suture material and is positioned within a central region of the base, as defined by the suture retaining area, such that the needle engages the needle park to maintain the needle in a fixed position.

7. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 5, wherein the suture retaining area is further defined by a wall extending from a lower surface of the cover.

8. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 1, wherein the cover has a circumference dimension which is substantially equal to a circumference dimension of the base.

9. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 1, wherein the needle park comprises three cantilevered members that provide a three-point contact with the needle.

10. The package for surgical suture material as recited in claim 9, wherein the needle park is flexible to accommodate needles having different curvatures.

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